

was no hermit. Whereas Flaubert made his books to a great extent out of books. He was never really at home in Paris; even *L'Education* is a picture of the previous generation, not of the present, and was preceded by long poring over old newspaper-files. But apart from this need of experience of life, I believe that the creative impulse itself is not, in the long run, suited by hermitages, and that the imagination seldom continues to breed well in captivity. A man who withdraws wholly from life in order to create greater books is liable to be like the owl that bit off the feet of the mice that they might lie still and grow fatter. A Wordsworth may write great poetry in the peaceful seclusion of Grasmere, but only with tie tumbrils of the Revolution and the voice of Annette Vallon still ringing in his ears; prolong this cottage-life indefinitely, and maundering supervenes. Whereas a Byron, charging from one escapade into another, writes better and better to the end. No doubt there are exceptions, but I question if Flaubert's life shows him to have been one. In 1849 he read the first *Saint Antoine* to Bouilhet and Maxime du Camp at Croisset, expecting them to be flattened with admiration. After listening for thirty-two hours, their reply was: 'Burn it.' And then one added: '*Tu dcvrais ecrire Thistoire de Delamarre.' It was a subject at the opposite extreme to *Saint Antoine*. Delamarre had been a doctor known to Flaubert's

father; he became
the prototype of Charles Bovary. From that
germinated
the novel. But it is not merely that its
subject was
thus taken from the actuality of personal
experience.
Flaubert himself next set off to the East; it
was by the
Second Cataract of the Nile, in 1850, that,
with characteristic
indifference to what lay before his
eyes, he ex-
claimed: 'Eureka, eureka! Je l'appellerai
Emma Bovary/
Further, the writing of the book after his
return coincided